

# SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

106th Congress  
1st Session

Vote No. 88

April 19, 1999, 5:31 p.m.  
Page S-3845 Temp. Record

## ROSA PARKS CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL/Passage

**SUBJECT:** A bill authorizing the award of a congressional gold medal to Rosa Parks . . . S. 531. Passage.

**ACTION: BILL PASSED, 86-0**

**SYNOPSIS:** As introduced and passed, S. 531 will authorize the President to award to Rosa Parks, on behalf of Congress, a gold medal of appropriate design honoring her in recognition of her contributions to the Nation. Findings include that Rosa Parks has dedicated her life to the cause of universal human rights and that her act of non-violent civil disobedience in refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white man ignited the civil rights movement, which is the most significant social movement in the history of the United States.

**Those favoring passage contended:**

This bill will honor one of the most important figures in the American civil rights movement, Mrs. Rosa Parks, by awarding her a Congressional gold medal in recognition of her immense contributions to our country. She has dedicated her life to the cause of advancing civil rights, but one act in particular, an unplanned, quiet act of non-violent civil disobedience when she refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man, is notable because it ignited the civil rights movement and led to the end of legal segregation in America. The day that Mrs. Parks refused to accept being treated as a second-class citizen because of her color is a seminal and great day in American history.

Rosa Louise McCauley was born in Tuskegee, Alabama in 1913. At age 2 she moved to her grandparents' farm in Pine Level, Alabama, with her mother, Leona McCauley, and younger brother, Sylvester. Her mother, a school teacher, taught her at home until, at age 11, she enrolled in the Montgomery Industrial School for Girls. The young Miss McCauley cleaned classrooms to pay her tuition, then moved on to attend Booker T. Washington High School. She was forced to leave that school to take care of her sick mother. In 1932 she married Raymond Parks. Mr. Parks, who was largely self-taught, supported his wife Rosa's desire to finish high

(See other side)

YEAS (86)				NAYS (0)		NOT VOTING (14)	
Republican (49 or 100%)		Democrats (37 or 100%)		Republicans (0 or 0%)	Democrats (0 or 0%)	Republicans (6)	Democrats (8)
Abraham	Hutchinson	Akaka	Hollings			Bennett <sup>-2</sup>	Biden <sup>-2</sup>
Allard	Hutchison	Baucus	Inouye			Frist <sup>-2</sup>	Kerry <sup>-2</sup>
Ashcroft	Inhofe	Bayh	Johnson			Gregg <sup>-2</sup>	Lautenberg <sup>-2</sup>
Bond	Kyl	Bingaman	Kennedy			Jeffords <sup>-2</sup>	Mikulski <sup>-2</sup>
Brownback	Lott	Boxer	Kerrey			McCain <sup>-2</sup>	Moynihan <sup>-3AY</sup>
Bunning	Lugar	Breaux	Kohl			Shelby <sup>-2</sup>	Reed <sup>-2AY</sup>
Burns	Mack	Bryan	Landrieu				Sarbanes <sup>-2</sup>
Campbell	McConnell	Byrd	Leahy				Torricelli <sup>-2</sup>
Chafee	Murkowski	Cleland	Levin				
Cochran	Nickles	Conrad	Lieberman				
Collins	Roberts	Daschle	Lincoln				
Coverdell	Roth	Dodd	Murray				
Craig	Santorum	Dorgan	Reid				
Crapo	Sessions	Durbin	Robb				
DeWine	Smith, Bob	Edwards	Rockefeller				
Domenici	Smith, Gordon	Feingold	Schumer				
Enzi	Snowe	Feinstein	Wellstone				
Fitzgerald	Specter	Graham	Wyden				
Gorton	Stevens	Harkin					
Gramm	Thomas						
Grams	Thompson						
Grassley	Thurmond						
Hagel	Voinovich						
Hatch	Warner						
Helms							

### EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

### SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

school and to attend Alabama State College, which she did.

The couple settled in Montgomery, Alabama, where they were active in the local chapter of the NAACP and the Montgomery Voters League. Mrs. Parks worked to register African American voters and to fight the violence and injustice visited upon them under segregation. As Mrs. Parks put it, "There were cases of flogging, peonage, murder, and rape." During this time the NAACP "didn't seem to have too many successes. It was more a matter of trying to challenge the powers that be, and to let it be known that we did not wish to continue being second-class citizens."

Rosa Parks personally issued that challenge to the powers that be on December 1, 1955. Mrs. Parks, employed as a seamstress in a local department store, boarded a Montgomery city bus on that day. After a few stops, a number of white people got on the bus--too many to fit into the seats in the "whites only" section. Seeing a white man standing on his bus, the driver ordered Mrs. Parks and three other African Americans to give up their seats to him. The other three people moved, but Rosa Parks had had enough. She refused to give up her seat. She was arrested, she was taken to jail, and 4 days later she was convicted of disorderly conduct. Her crime? Refusing to be treated as a second class citizen.

Even before this unjust conviction was handed down, indeed, the very day after Mrs. Parks' arrest, the response, born of righteous indignation, had begun. Mrs. Parks had set in motion events that would change the face of the United States forever. On December 2, the Women's Political Council distributed fliers throughout the community encouraging African Americans to boycott the Montgomery bus system on the day of Mrs. Parks' trial. A meeting was held at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, whose pastor was the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This meeting, held to plan the boycott, included the Reverend Ralph Abernathy, Reverend King, and Jo Ann Robinson of the Women's Political Council.

The boycott was an astounding success, and on the day of Mrs. Parks' trial the Montgomery Improvement Association was formed with Dr. King as spokesman and president. The Montgomery Improvement Association took over management of the bus boycott, which was to last 381 days, and filed suit on behalf of those against whom the bus company had discriminated. In the face of widespread harassment, threats, and even bombs, the brave people of the Montgomery Improvement Association, along with their supporters, kept up their boycott while their case made its way through the courts. Finally, on November 13, 1956, the Supreme Court held Montgomery's bus segregation unconstitutional. After a brief period of defiance the segregationists gave in, and the boycott ended.

Of course this was far from the end of the battle for civil rights in America. But it was an important event, spurring the civil rights movement to further action. Through marches, boycotts, civil disobedience and the power of their principles, members of the civil rights movement broke down the barriers of legal discrimination and established equality before the law as a reality for all Americans. Rosa Parks set these historic events in motion. Because of her faith, perseverance, and quiet dignity, all Americans have been freed from the moral stain of segregation.

Rosa Parks paid a price for her principles. She was arrested. She lost her job. She could not find work. She was constantly harassed. However, she never gave in. She has remained active in the civil rights movement for more than 40 years now. Ms. Parks has received many awards in recognition of her efforts for racial harmony, including the Springarn Award, the NAACP's highest honor for civil rights contributions, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Nation's highest civilian honor, and the first International Freedom Conductor Award from the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center.

Throughout her long life, Rosa Parks has shown that one woman can make a real difference. She has shown all of us the power of conviction and quiet dignity in pursuit of justice and empowerment. We urge our colleagues to support this legislation to bestow upon her the Congressional gold medal she so well deserves.

**No arguments were expressed in opposition to passage.**